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RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 0561  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0474

C O N F I D E N T I A L AMMAN 000679

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STATE ALSO FOR PRM, CA AND NEA  
CAIRO FOR DOETSCH

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/13/2017  
TAGS: [PREF](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [JO](#) [IZ](#)  
SUBJECT: IRAQIS SWAMP UNHCR OFFICES IN JORDAN

REF: KANESHIRO-REIMER TELCON OF 02/13/07

Classified By: Classified by Ambassador David Hale for Reasons 1.4 (b)  
and (d)

11. (C) SUMMARY: Crowds of Iraqis flocked to UNHCR offices in Amman February 12. Word appears to be spreading of UNHCR's recent policy shift, under which it now treats all south- and central-Iraqis outside Iraq as having a prima facie case that they are refugees, and as therefore eligible for referral for resettlement in third countries. END SUMMARY.

NUMBERS  
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12. (SBU) UNHCR offices in Amman (which are in the neighborhood where many Embassy Americans live) experienced a surge in applications February 12 when 500-700 Iraqis gathered in the street. UNHCR Amman imposed an interview scheduling system that kept numbers down February 13.

DRIVING FACTORS  
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13. (SBU) UNHCR officials cite two factors behind the rush to register. First, they believe Iraqis are reacting directly to reports that the Syrian government may be tightening policies toward Iraqis. According to Amman UNHCR representative Rob Breen, Iraqis in Jordan "appear nervous" that Jordan could also be on the verge of cracking down on Iraqis. (COMMENT: GOJ officials have not indicated to Amman emboffs any intent to move in this direction to date. END COMMENT.)

14. (C) More generally, Iraqis in the region are starting to demand the new attestation letters that UNHCR has been issuing since it decided to recognize Iraqis from south and central Iraq as prima facie refugees. Breen told refcoord that he was convoked by senior Ministry of Interior officials on February 12 concerned about the crowds at UNHCR offices and the numbers UNHCR is prepared to register. According to Breen, GOJ officials asked for the specific number of Iraqis that UNHCR is prepared to recognize as refugees in 2007. Breen said he informed them that UNHCR plans to register 65,000 Iraqis in Jordan in 2007 but also stressed that registration is not automatic and that exclusion rates could average as much as 10-15%. (NOTE: UNHCR screens for excludability during the registration process and will not issue an attestation letter if there is a suspicion the applicant having committed an excludable crime. END NOTE.)

¶15. (SBU) UNHCR representatives cite the recent visit of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and strong regional media interest in the situation of Iraqis as key factors behind the widespread awareness within the Iraqi community of UNHCR's new registration and third-country resettlement practices. In Jordan, UNHCR,s representative reports that many of the Iraqis who presented themselves at UNHCR,s offices on the 12th had heard that IOM staff from Cairo were in town conducting resettlement interviews and are concerned that newer arrivals will be considered first given that they are now being given appointments in March while earlier applicants were scheduled for June (before UNHCR had hired new staff).

¶16. (SBU) UNHCR Amman reports that Jordanian authorities have been responsive to their requests for additional police protection. UNHCR HQ has also reportedly informed UNHCR's offices in Cairo and Amman of NGO allegations of mistreatment of Iraqis by private contract security staff and local police at their gates within the last 48 hours. Both local UNHCR offices, however, have investigated these claims and deny any wrongdoing. However, UNHCR Amman is reinforcing the crowd-control training they are providing their local contract guards and are also ensuring that international staff are posted outside to supervise. UNHCR is also providing training to Jordanian diplomatic police but notes that it is difficult to ensure 100% coverage as diplomatic police rotate every four hours.

¶17. (SBU) UNHCR Amman has also set up notices and distributed leaflets establishing hours for registration interviews and renewals, in an effort to better manage the crowds. UNHCR Amman anticipates that they can meet any higher demand for registration by establishing new targets to issue 125 new registrations/day.

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